SUMMARY

The contradictions and inconsistencies of the various schools of philosophy in the pre-Ch’ìn era dramatically, yet logically, evolved into a trend demanding unification of thoughts during the Chan-Kuo period. Among the philosophers exerting constant influence on the unification was Hsün Tzu who developed and remoulded Confucianism to absorb the cream of the various schools, and paved the way for the ideological unification through political means in the Ch’ìn and Han dynasties. Hsün Tzu’s thought was in many ways reflected in Ch’ìn-Han intellectual life and political events. With the evidences produced in this thesis, it is now possible to bring to light, inter alia, that:—

(1) contrary to the prejudices against Ch’ìn arising from the “Burning of the Books” in 213 B.C., the Ch’ìn regime did adopt a policy of accommodating Confucianism throughout the dynasty;

(2) Hsün Tzu’s concept of Fa-hou-wang (following practices of the sage-kings of later times), which placed more emphasis on an insight into the ascertainable practical consequences of the implementation of politics during the dynasties immediately before Chan-Kuo, rather than the untraceable historical developments in ancient time, was the latent force behind the socio-political transformation from late Chou to Ch’ìn, and thence to Han;
(3) the restoration of the Confucian Classics suffering at the "Burning of the Books" was largely attributable to the services of the Confucianists of Hsūn school;

(4) the emergence of the Ritualist school of thought in Han, which laid the foundations for a stable, continuing system for a stratified society, was the culmination of the influence of Hsūn Tzu who was specialised in rites;

(5) Han Confucian scholars, toeing the line of Hsūn Tzu, were no longer puritanical Confucianists, hence the incorporation of extraneous elements from other doctrines in their works;

(6) most of the important Confucian scholars engaged by Han Wu-ti were from Hsūn school, Hsūn Tzu's influence thus led Wu-ti to formulate his policy of encouraging philosophical monopoly by Confucianism, which decidedly moulded the direction of thought for some 2,000 years since then in China.

Particular attention is given to the socio-political aspect of Hsūn Tzu's thought to enhance practical social value of this research in the context of our present-day intellectual life. The positive aspects of Hsūn Tzu's philosophy, if well developed, would be an added cultural asset to our society. Efforts have therefore been made to dispel unnecessary prejudices, with a view to providing a more balanced judgement.